



Ambassador John Berry – U.S.-Australia Biomedical Research Conference

**Ambassador Berry's Remarks at the
Opening Session of the
U.S.-Australia Biomedical Research Partnership Conference
University of Canberra
(As prepared – July 13, 2015)**

Welcome and Acknowledgements

Professor Calma -- thank you so much for opening this historic conference and for hosting us here at the University of Canberra today. Thank you for your leadership on U.S.-Australia collaboration in so many areas.

Professor Kelso -- it's an honor to be with you today in your new role at the NHMRC. I look forward to working with you.

Professor Frazer, our panel chairs, and to everyone who has made the trip to Canberra for this important conference, thank you for your contributions.

I'm also very grateful to the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy for Health and Medical Sciences for their support of this conference. I'd also like to recognize Dr. Avi Rasooly from our National Institutes of Health for all his work in organizing this event.

It is a real pleasure to welcome you to this important conference, which is the first time the U.S. Embassy has been involved in bringing together Australian biomedical researchers to explore future opportunities for collaboration.

Global Health and the U.S.-Australia Partnership

Global health is a central theme of President Obama's development agenda, which calls for new and innovative approaches to challenges such as food security, combating disease, and working towards an AIDS-free generation.

It's clear that American scientists could have no better partner than their counterparts in Australia as we seek solutions to these important global challenges.

For me, there are few areas in the U.S.-Australia relationship that are more exciting and productive than the work we do together on biomedical research.



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Shortly after arriving in Australia, I had the privilege of visiting many of your top medical research institutes, and I was amazed to learn more about the work you are doing.

I was particularly impressed by the advances Australian and U.S. researchers have made in the area of neuroscience: The Queensland Brain Institute, Melbourne Brain Centre, and South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute are but a few examples of institutions making significant progress in this field.

I was pleased that our Embassy and the NHRMC were able to work together last year to recognize the extent of our bilateral collaboration on neuroscience research. In a public fact sheet highlighting bilateral cooperation during Prime Minister Abbott's visit to Washington, the White House included Australian support of President Obama's BRAIN Initiative, and this high-level recognition has helped facilitate discussions on an MOU between the United States and Australia on neuroscience.

I also was very impressed last year with Australia's leadership on working towards an AIDS-free generation, as you hosted the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne. We're honored that Sharon Lewin, one of the co-chairs of the International AIDS Conference, is with us today.

While in Melbourne last July, I was blown away by the breadth of engagement between the United States and Australia on this most critical of health challenges. U.S. and Australian researchers, government officials, and key figures in civil society all stepped up to the plate in Melbourne to demonstrate their commitment to the cause.

Policy Challenges for the Future

But as you all understand better than I do, our biomedical research partnership doesn't end with neuroscience or HIV/AIDS. A quick glance at today's agenda -- which also includes genomics, medical diagnostics, and public health -- illustrates both the depth and breadth of our bilateral cooperation in this area.

As you have discussions on all of these areas today, I would encourage you to see if we can push the envelope a little bit.

Because despite all of the successes we've experienced, I think the key question in an environment of growing global health challenges and shrinking health budgets is: Beyond today's conference, are there ways we do more together?

Should we do more, for example, to strengthen or formalize our partnership? To date, we've essentially facilitated organic "grass-roots" connections between U.S. and Australian research



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institutions. Is this informal approach sufficient in this day and age, or should we think about a more formal agreement?

Should we do more on any of the specific biomedical research topics that you will explore today? I mentioned the BRAIN Initiative and HIV/AIDS a moment ago, but there may be other areas that are ripe for deepening collaboration. One idea I would suggest is for today's conference chairs to develop a "working group" that will identify areas of common interest, goals, and mechanisms to enhance our partnership, which could make suggestions on this question. I would be happy to be involved in such an effort.

Should we explore ways to collaborate trilaterally or multilaterally with other countries in the region to address global challenges? While we've had a great deal of success bilaterally, it strikes me that we have other friends in the Asia Pacific region -- like Japan, Canada, South Korea, and New Zealand -- with whom we may want to explore biomedical collaborations on a multi-country basis. Would it make sense to extend our friendships with these countries to the biomedical arena?

We don't want to just meet today as a "one off" and walk away. While bringing together everyone for today's conference is definitely a milestone, it is a means to an end.

I'm looking forward to hearing the outcomes of today's panel discussions, as well as your ideas on how we can do more together in the future. I will do whatever I can to deepen and expand our engagement on biomedical research, which is one of the most exciting fields in our bilateral relationship.

Thank you.